



ZOOLOG

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Bennett's Wallaby

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The Wallaby Story

The first hints of the Assiniboine Park Zoo ever getting to exhibit Wallabies came when the past president of the Zoological Society, Dr. Richard Glover, broached the subject in 1960.

The actual start of the Winnipeg Wallaby success began in 1961 with the arrival of seven of these animals. Three were received from Holland, and four from England. This herd of Australian animals posed a few problems of wintering, but with electrical heating this particular group seemed to thrive very well. In fact, the herd multiplied and soon increased to a total of sixteen animals. Zoos the world over employ the handy method of barter and exchange, and the sixteen were reduced to 1,9. in no time (This is Zoo-language for 1 male, 9 females.) The Assiniboine Park Zoo kept the biggest male of the herd; unfortunately, breeding came to a complete halt. To the utter amazement of visitors and others not intimate with the problems of raising animals, the breeding of wild animals is no simple male-female equals babies matter. Many, and sometimes underterminable things enter the picture and so it was with the Wallabies. The conclusion the Zoo Director, Dr. G. Voss, arrived at was that in order to get Wallaby males in the proper frame of mind, they must have competition. In spite of this dilemma, Dr. T. Reed from the United States

National Zoo in Washington was very impressed by this excellent herd of Wallabies on a recent visit here.

Always concerned about the Zoo, Dr. Voss spent his annual two weeks vacation going from Zoo to Zoo in Europe in search of Wallabies, particularly males. The trading seemed to be brisk, for he returned with impressive results. 1,0 from Saarbruecken Zoo in trade for 1,2 Canadian Porcupines; 1,0 from Duisburg in exchange for 2 female Whitetail Deer fawns; 1,1 from Edmonton, trading one pair of Four Horned Sheep; and one pair of Wallaroos to Bristol in exchange for 1,2 Wallabies.

Winnipeg may now boast of the largest Wallaby herd in North America and this beautiful exhibit becomes even more valuable to the Zoo through the demand for these animals from other Zoos, a great value in the trading of animals.

Only one incident marred this story of success. The largest, most beautiful male of the herd was ruthlessly chased by two huge dogs until it killed itself by hitting a fencepost at the time when the perimeter fence was still under construction. One of the dogs was found by a keeper in the back of the enclosure following the night of the chase.

President's Message

With this issue of Zoolog you will see that a new format has been created, I feel certain will make our publication more attractive and readable. A face-lifting in itself is not necessarily important, but it symbolizes what I hope will become a re-dedication to the cause of greater membership and interest in the progress of our Assiniboine Park Zoo from the public at large.

My most recent visit to the Zoo has convinced me that we at last have something of which to be very proud. A look behind the scenes with Dr. Voss a few days ago promised that our Zoo will be an even greater asset to the community in the years to come. Certain items of building have been started beyond the already developed portion of the Zoo.

The credit for this new Zoolog format and for some of the other forward thinking on increasing our membership roles, goes to Peter Schwanke, who some will recall a few years ago when he first arrived from Germany was a keeper at the Zoo. Peter has since branched out, becoming the publisher of several weekly newspapers and trade journals in Manitoba. He has kept up a strong interest in the Zoo and a few weeks ago readily accepted responsibility for editing the Zoolog beginning with this current issue. He is looking for suggestions from readers and the contribution of serious articles on animals. We are all looking forward to working with him as the years go by.

George Heffelfinger

Pushcarts

It has been claimed that the "no cars" policy of our Zoo discriminates against elderly people and others who are having difficulty in walking. This is not so. At the entrance of the Zoo Pushcarts and Wheelchairs are available at no cost, a permanent attendant

at the gate will even bring this cart to the car. These are bought from J. J. Perko Company, "Commercial Strollers of Distinction", Cleveland, Ohio, and cost \$78.75 for adult units, \$23.50 for children's units.

New in the Zoo

Amongst the most popular exhibits of the Assiniboine Park Zoo are the moated enclosures, and especially the most recently occupied. The Prairie Dog range in the south west corner of the lookout hill draws visitors like a magnet. Looking at these animals, visitors become suddenly aware of the lowly ground squirrels and some visitors mention to keepers that they have seen one of the Prairie Dogs at large, and why doesn't he catch it. Alas, Manitoba harbours no Prairie Dogs. What is commonly called 'Gopher' is the Richardson's Ground-squirrel; the somewhat greyer and bushy tailed 'Gopher' that lives preferably in not so open, more treed areas is Franklin's Groundsquirrel.

At the end of June, a dozen Raccoons were released into their new,

moated enclosure and fascinate people to no end when they, the Raccoons, hang sleepily over one of the branches way up in the sky. Camera bugs are forever taking pictures of this but will doubtlessly be terribly disappointed when they get the developed pictures. The brightness of the sky will leave the Raccoons nothing but small, black blobs, if that, unless the photographer has compensated for this by judicious use of his equipment.

The most recently occupied barless enclosure is that of the Hyenas. This exhibit seems to fascinate visitors more than any other, perhaps they expect to see one of the Spotted Hyenas to leap over the moat at any moment. However, the animals have not even made the slightest attempt at this and seem to be very happy in their new enclosure.



**Now
you can see**

In days of yore, visitors to the Zoo's Duck Pond used to be utterly confused. Initially there were no signs at all. In 1960 the Zoo budget allowed the purchase of written labels and visitors were still confused by the signs and names of the various species of waterfowl on exhibit. The knowledge that the pond contains Gadwall, Mallards, Canvasbacks, Red-Breasted Geese, Brents, Mandarin Ducks and Lesser Scaups does not help the pub-

lic much. This has prompted the Zoo-Director, Dr. Voss, to design a new kind of label, depicting the animal described. This will make it easy for visitors to identify the species, and greatly add to the educational value of the waterfowl exhibit. Besides, the signs itself are beautiful.

The illustrations are painted by an artist employed by the Royal Ontario Museum in Toronto.

The Entrance Story

The Assiniboine Park Zoo welcomes its visitors with open arms, expressed in the purposeful design of the new main entrance. From a central building that contains push-carts and strollers for disabled adults and children, two arms stretch out welcoming the visitor. For rainy days, these arms have roofs and benches underneath and in the open are comfortably slatted to allow rainwater to disappear fast. Under the Zoo sign a beautiful rock garden whets the visitors appetite for the displays that await him inside the gate.

On the inside, undulating paths lead the visitor amongst shady trees to the Emperor Goose pond, where geese are at large and show no inclination whatever to leave. The Emperor Goose, further described in Zoolog, likes cool areas and green lushious grass. Both are available at this entrance pond, and the geese show their approval of the area quite visibly, as visitors watch in astonishment and wonder why geese don't run away.



Open arms

Old time menageries tried to put animals in a cage, and if the director was really ambitious, he allowed some landscaping to be done between the cages; careful, however, not to disturb the straight and rectangular roads and streets that took priority over all else.

As man progressed, he learned that nothing in nature may be separated without at least undesirable effects. Nature, the rocks, the plants, the animals, and finally man, are much more intricately dependent on one another than was imagined even as late as the early twentieth century. This most recent knowledge of our intimate relationship with nature is hauntingly impressive when we step out of our cars on the asphalt parking lot, are received among the wooden arms of welcome and, after walking around a hexagon of rocks and greenery, enter to find tall oaks, a cooling pond; and before we are aware of it, we are looking at the Emperor Geese, our first exhibit.



The winding paths

The entrance pond not only appeals to the Emperor Geese, a native Mallard hen has taken up residence there and is raising her ducklings on the pond. In fall, she will no doubt take her flock south and, we hope, will return next spring.

Many visitors have admired the plants within the entrance hexagonal and we have enquired from Mr. Bill Grey, in charge of the conservatory, what these plants are. At the very edge of the flowers and bushes you will notice a pale plant with fattish leaves, *Echeveria*; separating flowers from grass in an inside circle is a Sagebrush coloured growth, *Santolina*; *Aschyranthus* are prominent with their red, curly leaves and the vine-like greenery over the rocks is *Mesembryanthemum*. Marigold needs no description and *Althernantha* represented in three varieties completes the list of intriguing beauty.



Can you find the geese?



From asphalt to greenery

Late Summer in the Zoo

The casual Zoo visitor might be led to believe that all during summer animals live the life of ease. Rolling in the warm sand, fresh food in abundance, most young ones now on their own, the animal can now relax and put on a hefty layer of fat for the winter. One might believe that apart from staying alive, biological processes have come to a standstill. Naturally, this is erroneous.

All deer shed their antlers annually, usually in midwinter or early spring. Even the moose, a giant among the deer, each year discards its enormous spread of antlers that actually weighs up to sixty pounds.



Mule Deer in Velvet

This process is naturally also taking place with deer in Manitoba, the Whitetail bucks are seeking heavily treed areas for this purpose and may hardly be seen, the Elk in Riding Mountain National Park and in the Duck Mountain areas are also very secretive not only because of their velvet shedding, but also because their annual preparation for mating season in the middle of September, during which bull Elks eat almost nothing at all. Moose and the somewhat rare (in Manitoba) Mule Deer are also busy rubbing their antlers to be free of the soft and vulnerable velvet.

About two weeks after the old antlers drop off, a rounded ball of fur begins to show on the stubs left by the old antlers. This is soft, spongy, and full of blood. The blood circulates in the growing antler as it does in the rest of the body. Very rapidly, this ball of fur expands and takes the form characteristic of the antlers in the particular species.

Growth of the antlers continues until the final dimensions are reached, usually in late summer. When the antlers are mature, the flow of blood and nourishment ceases, the built-up material hardens to its normal bone-like consistency and the velvet peels off. This process is assisted by the animal itself by rubbing the antlers against trees and branches. Depending on the kind of trees available, the finished antlers have a deep brown colouring, with gleaming white ends. As in some zoos the supply of rubbing-trees is somewhat limited, most captive deer have plain white antlers. However in our zoo, trees are given to the animals just for this purpose.

Although autumn is still a few weeks away, this is the time of year when one of the most beautiful and much maligned animals makes its appearance almost everywhere in Manitoba. It's the skunk. Although the skunk is one of the most important carriers of rabies, is a robber of birds nests, smells and can make a mess of any refuse disposal can, and otherwise not much good can be said about him; he is still a beautiful member of our native fauna and ought not to be completely eliminated. To judge any animal, or anything at all, strictly by a measure of economic usefulness is very dangerous. Who knows, perhaps you too might not be up to snuff and are therefore to be put on the not wanted list.

The Emperor Goose

The Emperor Goose is a medium sized goose with a short, smooth bill. The crown, sides of the head and hind neck white, tail white, body plumage silvery grey. The bill is a pale pink, the upper mandible tinged with blue around the nostrils, lower mandible mostly black. Legs and feet are deep yellow. Freshly moulted birds are considerably bluer and brighter than those in worn plumage.

The downy chicks have black bill and legs, are pearl-grey, darkish on the head and lighter below. The Emperor Goose lays three to eight eggs, long in shape and creamy white. Incubation period is twenty-four days.

These Geese breed on the north-western coast of Alaska from the Kuskokwin River to the north of the Seaward Peninsula, St. Lawrence Island, and the north-eastern coast of Siberia from the mouth of the Anadyr north along the shores of the Tchuktchi Peninsula, and west to Kolyutchin Bay. They winter in the Aleutian Islands, along the western coast of Alaska Peninsula, south to Cook Inlet, the Commander Islands and Kamchatka. Stragglers in California, Wrangel Island, the northern coast of Alaska, Russia (Volga) and even Hawaii have been reported.

Emperor Geese are maritime birds frequenting the sea-shores and nesting

on the tundra around lagoons. They arrive in the second half of May on their breeding grounds and leave them late in August or early September. On St. Lawrence Island, they breed in large numbers, mostly on the southern shores where they also moult, and it may well be their centre of abundance. They are mated on the arrival at the breeding grounds, the males walking around the females and swinging their heads, uttering low notes. They never seem to nest more than ten miles inland. The chicks are hatched amongst driftwood in June or early July, and during August they wander quite helplessly through the tundra. Emperor geese feed a great deal on the shore, eating such items as seaweed, shellfish and other marine organisms; on the tundra, however, they feed on grass and berries, like other geese. In captivity, they thrive on pure water and good grass and dislike heat. It is curious that these geese in captivity do not show any preference for animal foods, although most of their wild food consists of animal matter.

As they make only short migrations, their flight is comparatively low and laboured. Their voice is shriller than in other geese and they also have a longer and lower alarm call, as well as pretty conversational notes.

Wildcats

A permit for import of European Wildcats has been applied for, and the next issue of Zoolog might be able to give more information on this interesting development.

What's A Tragopan?

Next issue will carry an article on tragopans, their new enclosure and the difficulties encountered in acquiring these beautiful birds.

Marsupials

In a popular sense Wallabies are nothing but small sized Kangaroos. Were they larger, they would be called Kangaroos, since it is size, in general, that determines which is which.

A large number of different kinds of Wallabies dwell in Australia, New Guinea, Tasmania and the neighbouring islands.

This whole area is well known for a peculiar aspect of its animal inhabitants. This area harbours the world's marsupials almost exclusively. A well known exception, among others, is the North American Opossum. This group of animals is called marsupials after a Latin word, marsupium, meaning pouch. Among the marsupials, we find eaters of flesh, of plants, of insects; we find animals so different as the Flying Phalanger, the Tasmanian Devil, the Koala. However, they all have in common a double womb, and generally lack a placenta, the organ by which our "modern" mammals nourish the young in the mother's body. Marsupials bring forth their young in a very incomplete stage of development. At birth, the hands and feet of these tiny bits of life are well formed, however, and somehow they manage to scramble through the mother's fur to the marsupials' peculiar pouch on the mother's



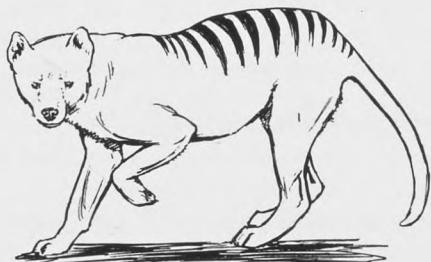
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abdomen. There, they find a ready supply of milk and are kept warm and safe until they are big enough to venture out of their haven, although sometimes quite large young climb back into the pouch in case of danger.

To conjecture on the whys and wherefores of such peculiarities as pouches is quite a useless endeavor. However, one animal with obvious reasons for the pouch is the North American Opossum which, while carrying young in its pouch, may already be pregnant with another litter, and sometimes has a third litter perched on its back. Were the Opossum not equipped in this manner, one might easily foresee its extinction; although due to the lack of competition from other animals the Australian marsupials seem to have very little trouble in keeping their own, save for the destruction of habitat by man, as in the case of the Koala, an animal very singular in its eating habits.

Among mammals, in the evolutionary ladder, marsupials are classified by Linne just one step higher than monotremata, the duck billed platypus and spiny anteater, whose young are brought forth in eggs.

Both monotremata and marsupials are peculiar to the Australian island continent because of an early separation of this landmass from other continents. This isolated these two groups from the competition of other animals and it would be futile to conjecture as to what might have happened to these animals with competition.



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Animal Donation, Wallaby, 1961.

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